

ISSUE 12

APRIL 2016



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DONATIONS WELCOME

Bank Name

HSBC

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Account Name

Fairbourne
Facing Change

Account Number

41488651

Account Sort Code

40-19-19

CONTACT US

Communication boxes in
the Village Hall foyer and
Fairbourne Newsagents.

Alternatively, contact the
FFC Secretary, Phil Parker.

Email

phil_w_parker@hotmail.com

Telephone

(01341) 250080

A Welsh language version
of this newsletter can be
made available on request.

O wneud cais gallwch
dderbyn fersiwn Gymraeg
o'r cylchlythyr hwn.

Legal News Update

FFC are pleased to report that funds raised for ongoing legal advice, and a possible resultant legal challenge, to date stand at £12,546. Thank you so much to everyone who has donated, these funds are vital to our cause. Whilst it would be unethical to publish names and amounts, we can reveal that our current balance has been received from 127 individual sources. We are also extremely grateful to those local businesses (some big names!) who have chosen to support us financially.

The FFC Core Group is now sufficiently confident of reaching our £15,000 target that we have officially appointed Tim Leader (barrister) to work on our behalf. Indeed, Tim has already visited Fairbourne for a conference meeting with FFC. Tim has now returned to his chambers and will be spending time studying our case and making himself familiar with all the finer details involved. A 'case file' containing over 600 pages of documentation had been prepared by FFC (a huge operation in itself), and this file was sent to Tim in preparation for our meeting.

We now need to allow time for documents to be read, studied, and contemplated by our barrister, before receiving further advice and information from him. This may take some time, but don't be disheartened. Work is continually going on behind the scenes, and along a number of different avenues. As always, will keep you fully informed of developments through our newsletters.

Funding Still Required

Our fight for justice and 'fair play' for the people of Fairbourne continues. Whilst we should never have been put in the position we find ourselves in, we still need to deal with the reality of it.

After reading the article above, you will have recognised that we are still £2,454 short of our £15,000 target. Initial advice and guidance was given to us completely free of charge by Tim Leader. Even now, the advice and guidance Tim is providing us with is being charged at a tiny fraction of the usual rates which would normally be applied by a barrister specialising in this field. Specialist legal work is extremely expensive (frighteningly so!), and we are very grateful indeed to Tim for being sympathetic to our situation.

If you haven't yet donated to our legal fund then please consider doing so. Remember, any funds raised for the legal fund which ultimately remain unused or unneeded, will be returned to you on a pro rata basis.

The enclosed envelope can be used to send donations to the FFC Treasurer, Bev Wilkins, either by hand delivery, or posted (stamp required). Please include your name and address so that we know who the donation is from.

Donations can also be made electronically either at your bank or via the internet or telephone banking. Bank transfers can be made directly to:

- HSBC Bank, Dolgellau Branch, Sort Code 40-19-19. The account name is 'Fairbourne Facing Change', and the account number is 41488651.

If you rent your property then please pass this information on to your landlord.

Hustings Event in Fairbourne - Saturday 16th April

The Welsh Assembly Elections 2016 are not too far away now, and we have organised a hustings event which will take place on Saturday 16th April, between 2pm and 4pm at Fairbourne Village Hall. This is an opportunity for you to hear what the candidates have to say on key political issues which affect us all, including their position on Fairbourne and the Shoreline Management Plan!

This is another high profile event which gives us as a community the opportunity to demonstrate our commitment and intent to find Political solutions to the position we face here in Fairbourne. This will be a popular event, and we are limited to just one hundred seats. Accordingly, **seats will be allocated on a first come - first served basis.**

These elections will determine the future political make up of the Welsh Assembly i.e. the people who will ultimately make the decisions about our future.

Politicians attending the Fairbourne hustings event are:

- Conservatives: Aled Davies.
- Green Party: Alice Hooker Stroud.
- Independent: Louise Hughes.
- Labour Party: Dr Ian Macintyre.
- Lib Dems: Stephen Churchman.
- Plaid Cymru: Lord Dafydd Elis Thomas.
- UKIP: Neil Hamilton.

Specific topics candidates have been asked to cover are as follows:

1. A solution for Fairbourne.
2. The Health Service in Wales.
3. Austerity Measures.
4. Increasing devolution to Wales.
5. Education in Wales.
6. The European Union.

These topics will be answered separately, and in rotation, following a question from the chair.



The Fairbourne Masterplan Currently being developed by Gwynedd Council and other Agencies

They are looking for people to attend a 'Masterplanning' session run by the Fairbourne Moving Forward project. The session will ask people to think what problems need to be faced, and then later in the session, come up with ideas as to how to solve those problems. They are looking to hold two separate (very informal) sessions, each with 15 to 20 people.

If you would be interested in contributing positively to the Masterplan by taking part in one of these sessions, please contact...

- The Fairbourne Moving Forward Project. Telephone: 01286 679591.
- Lisa Marshall at Gwynedd Council. Email: lisamarshall@gwynedd.gov.uk
- Arthog Community Council.
- The www.fairbourne.info website.

They would also like to hold a similar event for business owners in Fairbourne – please get in touch if you are a business owner who would like to become involved.

Another Dose of Digance for Fairbourne!

Richard Digance returns to Fairbourne Village Hall on Sunday 15th May. Over half of the available tickets have now been sold. Remaining tickets are on sale now at Fairbourne Post Office, and are priced at a bargain £10.

This concert **will** sell out – make sure you don't miss it!



Proposed 'Buy to Let' Scheme – Important Update:

The following Progress Report document has been produced by Gwynedd County Council (**not FFC**), it concerns the proposed 'Buy to Let' scheme which was a FFC initiative. Included in the article is a request for people to volunteer for a Property Condition Survey. This is part of the groundwork needed to evaluate the viability of a 'Buy to Let' Scheme.

This is a key piece of work needed to progress consideration of a viable scheme. **FFC would urge you, without prejudice, to volunteer for this Property Condition Survey.** You will not be committing yourself to anything at all, and there is no cost to you either. You have absolutely nothing at all to lose by having this report undertaken.

The report.....

Progress on the Buy to Let Scheme:

We have recently produced a 'Prospectus' style document to advertise the village and opportunity to commercial organisations and housing associations. This document is currently being reviewed by the board, prior to going to print.

We have a meeting arranged with Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd (CCG) to whom all Gwynedd's council housing stock was transferred some time ago to discuss this opportunity, in addition to meetings with two commercial developers operational within Gwynedd. These meetings are arranged for mid-April and feedback will be provided to the Working Group as to how these meetings went and any subsequent opportunities.

To support the 'marketing' of this opportunity, we feel it would be advantageous to undertake Property Condition Surveys on all properties where owners would possibly like to participate in the scheme. This would give us and a potential investor, an indication of the investment they would have to make to ensure houses meet the Welsh Quality Housing Standard, used for social landlords (this would need to apply even if you were to lease your house back from the investor) hence assist them in devising a financial investment model.

We are currently applying for funding from Welsh Government for these surveys to be carried out, but in the meantime, I would be grateful if anyone who is interested in participating in the scheme, could let me know in writing (letter or email); please provide details of your address, name and contact details. We will then be in touch once the funding has been received to undertake the survey.

Lisa Marshall also met with Gwynedd Council's Housing Team to discuss two matters, (a) Demand for social housing and (b) Empty houses:

a) Demand for social housing: A review had recently been conducted on 'demand by area'. This revealed that Fairbourne currently has four social housing properties and the waiting list has 17 people on it, wanting to live in Fairbourne. Clearly this is not a big number and I did ask whether we could 'promote' Fairbourne as a lovely place to live to others on the housing register or newcomers to the register, in order that we can raise the demand to live in the village. The Housing Team did say this was possible, but only if, for example, a housing association such as, eg, CCG, were looking into a scheme such as our Buy to Let and needed to fill vacant houses on their books.

Furthermore, I was advised that all housing associations co-ordinate the occupancy of their empty houses via Gwynedd Council's Housing list; this means that if the demand is large in a particular area, then the housing association will invest in that area (conversely, if the demand for houses is low, they won't invest). This poses something of a conundrum for us if we are to attract an investor for the Fairbourne Buy to Let scheme; demand is generally low, therefore commercial interest is likely to be low. We will work further on this through the Masterplan Group.

b) Empty Houses: A few questions have been asked along the lines of 'what happens to houses that become vacant, because people have died and the beneficiaries either don't want the house, or can't sell it?'. Gwynedd Council's Housing team have informed me that currently, if a house is left empty and they are notified, they write to the latest owner to ascertain if they intend to do anything with the property. If no intention is identified, the Council will offer to rent out the property on their behalf (forwarding revenue to the owner) or link the owner with potential tenants. If the house remains unoccupied and eventually falls in to ruin or becomes a hazard, then the council will write to the owner, asking them to make the property safe. If no reply is received, the home will be made safe at the council's cost and left.

Contact: Lisa Marshall, Gwynedd Council, Stryd Y Jel, Caernarfon, LL55 1SH.

Email: lisamarshall@gwynedd.gov.uk

Friog Corner - Proposed Coastal Defence Works:

The following is taken from a 'Briefing Note' which has been issued by Natural Resources Wales. The document explains NRW's plans for coastal defence works which are needed to the sea defences at Friog Corner.

NATURAL RESOURCES WALES – BRIEFING NOTE

Background:

The Fairbourne sea wall is the primary defence that protects Fairbourne from coastal flooding. Following storm-induced erosion of the beach adjacent to NRW's coastal defence structure at Friog Corner and the depletion of beach material covering the toe of the defence structures, we carried out emergency works in 2014 to protect a 75 metre section of defence, utilising rock armour from a local quarry.

Erosion and Shingle Depletion:

Beach shingle, which can be seen in vast quantities along much of the Fairbourne coastline, naturally assists the engineered defence. At Friog Corner there are signs of shingle depletion, and although a natural occurrence, this has placed the concrete defence itself under greater pressure, increasing the risk of damage and overtopping.

Developing a Solution:

The 2014 emergency works were undertaken to ensure the immediate integrity of the defence and safety of the community. Since then we have commissioned a detailed report to look at any further works to ensure these defences are effective and sustainable. Recommendations contained in the report have been adopted by NRW in our proposed way forward, and a preferred option devised that will offer a vital contribution to managing natural risk to the community of Fairbourne.

The Proposed Friog Corner Works:

We now propose improvements that will enhance the emergency works we've already completed and contribute to their sustainability and resilience.

We propose to:

- Import additional rock armour to reinforce a section of the defence at Friog Corner.
- Replenish the beach with shingle on the seaward side of the new armour to help protect it.
- Create a maintenance programme to sustain the defence and the important synergy between the hard engineered defence and the natural beach.
- Monitor changes so that we know how well the structures perform over time, and when maintenance might be needed.

Utilising Natural Processes at Fairbourne:

The coastal landscape and designated sites it holds are also important elements of Fairbourne. This proposal utilises excess material already within the system. By doing this we hope to establish a cyclical system that works with nature, supporting the natural balance of sediment transport here.

Progress:

NRW will provide updates to progress in due course. If you have any enquiries in relation to NRW's continued Flood Risk Management activities in the locality, please contact:

reuben.woodford@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk

The Fairbourne Moving Forward Project Board, for which we are a member, in discussion with the community, has set an intent to defend the village for a period of 40 years (with a base date of 2014). As long as there remains funding available from Welsh Government, Natural Resources Wales will continue monitoring, maintaining and investing in flood defence assets to protect the community of Fairbourne. This time period will be reviewed taking into account information developed as part of the Fairbourne Moving Forward project.

END.

FFC will keep you updated with any further news regarding Friog Corner as we receive it.